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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HERMOSILLO 000166

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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/MEX; EMBASSY MEXICO FOR CMMA, DEA, DHS/ICE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SNAR](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [MX](#)  
SUBJECT: SPIKE IN DRUG VIOLENCE IN HERMOSILLO

REF: HERMOSILLO 0055

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¶1. (U) Summary: Over the past several months there appears to be a trend of increasing violence in the area in and around Hermosillo, Sonora, culminating with several events during Holy Week. The violence appears to be largely confined to rival drug trafficking groups. Although there is no element of targeting AMCITS or Consulate personnel whatsoever, Post is concerned about the general increase in violence and the very public nature that is part and parcel of this phenomenon. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Hermosillo experienced an outbreak of drug-related violence earlier this year, as reported by Post in February and March (reftel). On March 20, unknown assailants also attacked a suspected major drug trafficker and his wife driving on Highway 15 (to Nogales) 83 kilometers north of Hermosillo. The couple survived AK-47 gunfire but were hospitalized after being run off the road and rolling their vehicle. Their attackers escaped.

RAID NEAR CONSULATE FAMILY'S HOME

¶3. (SBU) During the week of 11-18 April another major spike in violence-related activities occurred. On April 11, a house next door to a Consulate family was raided by individuals in plain clothes, apparently from an undetermined agency and assisted by Hermosillo municipal police. Information acquired by ICE suggests that the home was the suspected holding location for money, drugs and, possibly, an arms cache. All available information suggests that none of these were found and that no arrests resulted from the raid. The Consulate checked with police regarding this incident, but no police agency has admitted involvement.

MAJOR SHOOTOUT IN SHOPPING CENTER

¶4. (U) On April 13, there was a shootout between two groups in the parking lot in front of the MM Cinemas, which is in the popular Soriana Shopping Center at the corner of Boulevard Encinas and Boulevard Solidaridad. This attack involved five vehicles, one armored. One had been hit more than 30 times. Five other vehicles belonging to movie-goers received collateral damage. There were a total of over 300 rounds fired from AR15 and AK47 assault weapons. The theater was evacuated as one of the suspects took cover within the theater.

¶5. (SBU) DEA Hermosillo has developed information suggesting that this shootout involved two drug trafficking organizations (the Salazar-Zambrano and the Enriquez -Parra groups) vying for control of drug routes between the coast of the Gulf of California around Navojoa, Sonora and the U.S border. There is also speculation that a principal of one of the drug trafficking

groups was the actual target of the attack.

¶16. (SBU) According to the local newspaper El Imparcial, police recovered several firearms (including AK-47s) and one grenade from four vehicles that were involved in the incident. Also according to El Imparcial, five suspected participants were apprehended and later released. Sonora Governor Eduardo Bours said in a public statement that "it is possible that there were ex-agents of the state judicial police involved who left the service more than nine years ago." He rejected the idea that any current police officials were responsible. He acknowledged that the public perception of general security was affected by these incidents, but promised to reinforce security measures to ensure community safety. Post sources claim that detained suspects were indeed released and that, among them, one is a corrupted former chief of the anti-kidnapping unit of the state judicial police and nephew of a current PJGE deputy attorney general in Sonora. They also claim that another former state judicial police commander was among the five.

¶17. (U) Two people remain in custody in relation to this incident. One was caught at the scene carrying a weapon and reportedly was under the influence of drugs. The other is a taxi driver who claims that he unknowingly drove one of the assailants away from the scene. Upon inspecting his vehicle the following day, he discovered two grenades. According to reports, he voluntarily turned the ordinance over to police and was subsequently arrested for his efforts. The irony of this scenario has not been lost on the local media and this aspect of the incident has been the subject of several editorials and political cartoons. Other taxi drivers staged a protest in Hermosillo over the unjust nature of this arrest.

#### RANDOM KILLING OF POLICE OFFICER?

¶18. (U) Also on April 14, two police officers were shot outside of a police station on Ortiz Tirado street. The police were fired at from a passing car. Seven 9mm rounds hit officer Victor Alonso Mora Acuna and one hit officer Ivan de Jesus Velarde

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Ramirez. Officer Mora Acuna died at the scene and officer Velarde Ramirez, as of April 20, remains in intensive care. The shooting suspects were not captured and local police state that the motive for the shooting is unknown.

¶19. (U) Finally, on April 18, the armed robbery of two customers outside of the Santander Bank branch on Colosio Boulevard, one of Hermosillo's main avenues, ended after a police chase and gun battle nearby. One of the suspected robbers died from his injuries and the other was taken into custody.

¶110. (SBU) Comment: Local media are giving heavy play to the jump in violent incidents and calling for government action to restore public security. They are handling the matter of the release of the suspects more gingerly, through satire and indirect comment. Federal Investigation Agency (AFI) checkpoints have started to appear on some major thoroughfares in Hermosillo.

¶111. (SBU) Virtually all these incidents of violence occurred in locations close to and/or frequented by Consulate personnel and their families, however, AMCITS or members of the Consulate community are not the target. Nevertheless, Post is very concerned over the public nature of these shootings, during daylight hours, and in areas where Consulate personnel and their families may be conducting their daily activities. DEA Hermosillo believes that the violence we have seen this year could continue to escalate as rival groups in the area compete for control of lucrative drug routes into the US. The Hermosillo Emergency Action Committee (EAC) has met to discuss appropriate ways to sensitize the Consulate and wider American community to this danger. End Comment.

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